

# Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

1 (800) 315-6338 (MEET) Code: 58756# (KUSKO)

ADF&G Bethel toll free: 1 (855) 933-2433

July 12, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:01 p.m. on Tuesday July 12, 2016 and adjourned at 1:40 p.m. Meeting time was approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes. Nine full voting members were present and a quorum was established.

## AGENDA ITEMS:

### **Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Management Actions Under Consideration:**

#### **People to be Heard:**

**Continuing Business:** Run assessment and management actions.

#### **Old Business Discussion Topics:**

#### **New Business Discussion Topics:**

- Schedule a time to discuss Working Group structure including seat relevance, members holding multiple seats, and appropriate stakeholder representation.

**WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:** *No Action Items at the time of this meeting.*

## WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:

1. Approve the agenda as amended. *Passed (Unanimous)*
2. To request a follow-up on where funding went in regards to the genetic testing [in Area M] and where to seek funding and resources for an appropriate analysis to fill the gaps on the Kuskokwim River. *Passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)*
3. To support a letter by LaMont Albertson to Art Nelson and Joe Spaeder requesting discussion of Working Group structure at the next capacity building meeting. *Passed (Unanimous)*
4. To adjourn. *Passed (Unanimous)*

**ADF&G MANAGEMENT ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION:** Aaron Tiernan (ADF&G Assistant Area Management Biologist) reported that ADF&G had no management actions under consideration. The river remained open for subsistence fishing with 6" or less mesh gillnets until further notice. The specified tributaries from the ADF&G Fishery Announcement #5 remained closed to gillnets.

## PEOPLE TO BE HEARD:

### SUBSISTENCE REPORTS:

- **ONC Subsistence Report:** Janessa Esquible (ONC) summarized the ONC subsistence report and noted that all but one interview was conducted over the phone. *(For more information on the ONC report, please see the July 12 Informational Packet).*
- **Lower River:** Mary Sattler (Member at Large) commented that on July 10 she caught 10 sockeye salmon in her setnet and on July 11 she caught 15. She observed that fish camps in Steamboat Slough had completed or were in the final stages of processing their fish. Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing) commented that several people had just begun to harvest salmon. Mike Williams Sr. (Lower River Subsistence) reported that people had met their subsistence needs in his area. On July 12 Mr. Williams drifted for 10 minutes and caught 30 chum, 3 sockeye and 1 pink salmon.
- **Middle River:** LaMont Albertson (Sport Fishing) reported that some people were finished harvesting in the middle river and were pleased with their catch. Some people were looking to harvest silver salmon. Lisa Feyereisen (Middle River Subsistence alternate) commented that people were satisfied with their harvest in the middle river; some continued to fish and others were waiting for silver salmon.
- **Upriver:** Mark Leary (Upriver Subsistence) reported that people were satisfied with the fishing season. He commented that the fish wheel ran from July 8–10 and averaged 20 sockeye salmon per day; few chum salmon were caught. Barbara Carlson (Upriver Subsistence alternate) submitted a report, prior to the

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meeting, that people were content with their king salmon harvest. She commented that the sockeye salmon run was observed to have good numbers, but appeared late; chum salmon appeared lower in numbers compared even to 2015.

- **Headwaters:** Dan Esai (Headwaters Subsistence) commented that people were happy with the amount of fish they had harvested in the headwaters. Mr. Esai commented that people continued to release healthy females from their setnets. His village wanted to thank the lower river communities for their conservation efforts. Mr. Esai reported that a cultural camp was being conducted at the Salmon River (Pitka Fork) to teach youth subsistence skills. Ray Collins (Western Interior RAC) commented that people had to remove their nets early due to the high water; people had caught very few king salmon and were hoping for a good silver salmon run. He reported that people had been catching pike and Sheefish with hook and line. Mr. Collins commented that people were appreciative of the early closures in the lower river and added that he believed that headwater closures were not necessary in future years due to the limited fishing effort.

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

### **1. Overview of Kuskokwim River Salmon Run Assessment Projects:**

- **Bethel Test Fish:** Zach Liller (ADF&G) reported that water temperature was warmer than average, water clarity was below average, and the water level was above average. Mr. Liller reviewed the daily CPUE for Chinook, chum, and sockeye salmon at the BTF. The Chinook salmon run was nearing its end in the lower river. On average ~97% of Chinook salmon had passed Bethel by July 12. The daily average CPUE was ~13 and, to date, the cumulative CPUE was higher than the total CPUE in 2015. The chum salmon run was 52% larger at the BTF than observed in 2015 to date, but remained below the 5 and 10-year averages. Averaged across years, ~72% of the chum salmon run are generally passed Bethel by July 12, but assessment projects indicated that the chum salmon run may be late in 2016. Sockeye salmon continued to build in the lower river; the cumulative CPUE to date was above the recent year averages and the run appeared late. On average ~96% of the sockeye salmon run had passed Bethel by July 12, though assessment data indicated that the 2016 run may be late, with run timing similar to 2015. (*For more information on the BTF, please see the July 12 Informational Packet*).
  - **Aniak Test Fish:** Mr. Liller reported that the Chinook salmon run was nearing its end in the middle river and stable catches of chum salmon continued to be observed. ATF would complete operation on July 15. (*For more information on the ATF, please see the July 12 Informational Packet*).
  - **Weirs:** Mr. Liller reported that the water level had subsided and nearly all of the weirs were in operation with the exception of the Salmon River (Aniak) weir. Tatlawiksuk weir escapement for Chinook salmon was one of the highest on record despite being inoperable for four days due to high water. Kogrukluq weir Chinook salmon escapement was similar to the 5 and 10-year averages. Chum salmon escapement at the Kwethluk weir was greater than the recent 5-year average; all other escapement projects were reporting below average chum salmon passage. The Telaquana Lake weir was installed on July 4.
  - **Radio Tagging Project:** Mr. Liller reported that Chinook salmon catches had declined from the previous week. On July 9, the tagging crew reported a slight increase in catch of bright silver Chinook salmon.
2. **Commercial:** To date there was no identified market for buying fish on the Kuskokwim River.
  3. **Sport Fishing:** LaMont Albertson commented that people were not able to sport fish in the Aniak River due to high water and that people were catching Sheefish, chum and king salmon in the Owhat River.
  4. **Intercept Fishery Report:** Bill Bechtol (KRITFC) provided data from the NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service website regarding the intercept fisheries in the Bering Sea and Area M. (*See Motion 2*)

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## 5. Discussion of ADF&G Management Consideration and Discussion of Possible Alternatives:

The Working Group discussed opening the subsistence fishery to 8" mesh gear. Some members commented that since the majority of the Chinook salmon run had passed Bethel, using 8" mesh gear would not be productive. Others commented that they wanted to continue promoting Chinook salmon conservation by limiting gillnets to 6" mesh.

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Schedule a time to discuss Working Group structure including seat relevance, members holding multiple seats, and appropriate stakeholder representation:** Some Working Group members commented that an in-person, post season conversation regarding the Working Group's structure could benefit the overall Working Group process. (*See Motion 3*)

## **WORKING GROUP MOTIONS:**

1. **Approve the agenda as amended. Passed (Unanimous)**
2. **To request a follow-up on where funding went in regards to the genetic testing [in Area M] and where to seek funding and resources for an appropriate analysis to fill the gaps on the Kuskokwim River. Passed (9 yeas, 0 nays)**  
John Linderman (ADF&G) commented that the genetic study had only been funded for one year due to state fiscal issues.
3. **To support a letter by LaMont Albertson to Art Nelson and Joe Spaeder requesting discussion of WG structure at the next capacity building meeting. Passed (Unanimous)**
4. **To adjourn. Passed (Unanimous)**

## **COMMENTS FROM THE WORKING GROUP:**

- Bev Hoffman suggested that upriver and headwater Working Group members write to the Delta Discovery newspaper regarding how the early Chinook salmon closure and conservation efforts affected the upriver communities' harvest ability during the 2016 season. Ms. Hoffman expressed her appreciation for the inseason work by ADF&G, USFWS, KRITFC and the Working Group in managing the resource.
- Greg Roczicka commented that although people reported meeting their subsistence needs, the total harvest in 2016 was nearly half of ANS.
- LaMont Albertson expressed his appreciation of the early season closure for Chinook salmon implemented by the BOF.
- Mike Williams Sr. expressed his appreciation for the 2016 management work conducted by the KRITFC, USFWS and ADF&G.

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## WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE:

<b>MEMBER SEAT:</b>	<b>NAME:</b>
DOWNRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
UPRIVER ELDER	<i>Absent</i>
LOWER RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mike Williams Sr.
MIDDLE RIVER SUBSISTENCE	Lisa Feyereisen
UPRIVER SUBSISTENCE	Mark Leary
HEADWATERS SUBSISTENCE	Daniel Esai
MEMBER AT LARGE	Mary Sattler
WESTERN INTERIOR RAC	Ray Collins
YK DELTA RAC	Greg Roczicka
COMMERCIAL FISHING	Greg Hoffman Jr.
SPORT FISHING	LaMont Albertson
PROCESSOR	<i>Absent</i>
ADF&G	Aaron Tiernan
CHAIR	Mary Sattler

## **Other Participants:**

ADF&G Comm. Fish: Jen Peeks, Zach Liller, Chris Shelden, John Linderman

Sport Fishing:

Subsistence Division: Andrew Brenner, Lisa Olson

Commissioner's Office:

USFWS: Ray Born, Ben Staton, Spencer Rearden, Aaron Webber

OSM: Karl Lindberg, Jared Stone

Janessa Esquible (ONC)  
Alissa Joseph (ONC)  
Lynne Olick (ONC)  
Bill Bechtol (KRITFC)

Will Voinot-Baron  
Paula Schiefer  
Kevin Bartley

Media:

WG Alternates:  
Bev Hoffman

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G, department, State**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), Georgetown Traditional Council (**GTC**), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (**USFWS**), Bethel Test Fishery project (**BTF**), Catch Per Unit Effort (**CPUE**), Coastal Village Seafoods (**CVS**), ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division (**CF**), ADF&G Sport Fisheries Division (**SF**), Regional Advisory Council (**RAC**), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (**KRSMWG, Working Group, or WG**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**), Management Objective (**MO**), Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (**ANS**), Emergency Order (**EO**), Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (**BSFA**), Law Enforcement (**LE**), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (**KRITFC**)

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